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Ó Domhnaill Abú

O Donnell Clan Newsletter No. 19

Summer 1992

IN HOC SIGNO VINCES

Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill at the opening ceremony of the '92 Clan Gathering, Donegal Castle.

AUSTRIAN VISITORS.

Countess Gabrielle Palffe of Austria visited Ireland in June this year. Her mother, Countess Marianne O'Donell, of the Austrian branch did likewise in 1965. This was Countess Gabrielle's first visit and she spent a week here in Co. Donegal; a few days as a guest of Vincent(Editor) and Annette O'Donnell in Inver, and the rest, as a guest of Agnes Wilson, Greencastle, all of whom enjoyed the Countess's hospitality at one time or other at her home in Sigherstein Castle.

Her mother was married to Count Wolfgang Uberacker while Count Douglas O'Donell(Marianne's brother) was married to Countess Elizabeth Uberacker; a double marriage. Thus, the Countess and Count Gabrial are first cousins. The Uberackers were of Austrian aristocracy while the Countess's late husband, Count Joseph Palffe, was of Hungarian stock but lost his large estate there as a result of the war. He and his wife, Countess Gabrielle, lived in her parental home, Schloss Sigherstein, which she inherited. Alas! Schloss Sigherstein was sold in May of this year as the family found its continued upkeep a financial burden.

The Countess was enthralled with the beauty of the Donegal scenery, fascinated by the variety of birds, wild flowers, the everchanging weather and light, and was overcome by the the charm of the people, their friendliness and their generosity. She enjoyed witnessing sheepshearing on the farm of Cathal and Christina Campbell(nee O'Donnell). Christina, also, had met the Countess in Austria. The Countess visited Glencolmcille, St. John's Point and, of course, the castle and abbey in Donegal Town.

After leaving Co. Donegal she spent a few days with Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill(sister of our blood-line chief) in Dublin before returning to her home outside Salzburg.

Towards the end of July Count Douglas(Count Gabrial's son) and Count Rory(Count Johann's son) from Austria arrived in Ireland for three weeks. They, taking a break after studying for and setting university examinations, enjoyed O'Donnell hospitality in the land of their forefathers. During their

Countess Gabrielle Palffe admiring a cross-slab in Glencolmcille during her recent visit. Photo. V. O'Donnell.

stay with Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill in Dublin they toured the south and west of the Ireland. They, then, moved to Donegal where they were entertained by Vincent and Annette O'Donnell of Inver. Here, they enjoyed fishing for pollack and mackrel in Donegal Bay, wild brown trout in mountain lakes and salmon on the River Eany. Count Douglas landed three salmon(his first ever) while Count Rory netted a two-pound sea trout on the morning of Aug. 1st.

This being Count Rory's first time in Ireland, they were taken on a tour of the County visiting all places of O'Donnell importance including Daniel O'Donnell's home in Kincaslagh.

For two days, during the Mary From Dungloe festival, they were guests of Frankie Pa O'Donnell at his home in Burtonport where they enjoyed more fishing in the wild Atlantic along with some late-night sessions in Dungloe.

O'DONNELL CLAN GATHERING '92

Friday the 12th June dawned a cloudless, sunny day with temperatures in the afternoon reaching the 80's. Since early the day before, O'Donnells and friends had been converging on Donegal Town for the 1992 O'Donnell Clan Gathering.

By 7.00 p.m. people were assembling in the grounds of the castle; admission to the actual building was not granted due to the restoration works being carried out by the Office of Public Works. It was 7.15 when the Chairman,(yours truly), addressed the assembly. Having welcomed everyone in gaelic and in english he, then, called on the colour party (from nearby Finner Army Barracks) to parade the colours. This was followed by a drum-roll during which Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill, representing her family, raised the O'Donnell Standard. 'O'Donnell Abu' was then played on the warpipes and immediately after that, the National Anthem was played on a trumpet by one of the soldiers. This completed the opening ceremony.

All, then, retired to the Hyland. Central Hotel, where Ben O'Donnell, secretary of the Clan Association, introduced the special guests - Nuala Ni Dhomhnail, sister of Fr. Hugh O.F.M., our blood-line chief; Micheline K. Walsh who was later to give a talk on Red Hugh's escape; Joe McGarrigle, Mayor of Donegal, and Mrs. McGarrigle; Lucius Emerson, curator of the Co. Donegal Historical Society's Museum and quite an authority on O'Donnell History, along with his wife, Kathleen, the Society's secretary; Mrs. Mary Crossan who organised the '80 and '82 Clan Gatherings; Fr. Philip Dean O.F.M. representing the Franciscan community in Tirconaill and, finally, Mrs. Hannah O'Hara, at the age of 87, the oldest O'Donnell present.

After some speeches in which many complimentary remarks were made, we all enjoyed the sit-down buffet. Then, it was time for the high-light of the evening, Micheline Kerney Walsh's lecture. It is always a joy to listen to Micheline and this night was no exception. She outlined in great detail, giving the political background of the time, Aodh Rua's capture and escape (see ODA No. 10) 400 years ago. Her talk was very much appreciated and a vote of thanks was returned by Lucius Emerson.

Editor with the oldest and youngest guests, Mrs. Hannah O'Hara and Manus O'Donel(Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill's son).

After a break, to allow everyone to digest Micheline's words and get to the bar, we were entertained to 20 minutes of Irish harp-playing and singing by the McDevitt sisters from Kilcar. This was followed by our Grand Draw; the coveted prize, a set of the Annals of the Four Masters, was won by Conan Bonner, a young boy from near-by Ballydevitt.

All evening, during breaks, people registered in the Clan Association. Background music was provided by our local, talented pianist, Conor Sinclair. Conor was also our official photographer for the week-end.

Friday evening ended sometime Saturday morning with the whole assembly singing 'O'Donnell Abu' and our National Anthem.

On Saturday morning a bank of clouds blocked out the sun but not our spirits as we journeyed off through Barnes Mor Gap in Feda O'Donnell's coach. Vincent O'Donnell, acting as guide, gave an account of the 'Gearran Ban People' who inhabited the Gap over 400 years ago. They were a notorious tribe who indulged in gruesome pagan rituals and terrorised those passing that way until Red Hugh became chieftain of Tirconaill and severely punished them.

This road through Barnesmore was the only highway in the days of Red Hugh and linked Donegal Town with Lifford. Lifford was our next stop and in the refurbished Courthouse we were entertained to a wine reception by two gentlemen from Northern Ireland who intend building a castle there. It was at Port na dTri Namhad near Lifford that Manus O'Donnell(21st Chieftain) built a magnificent castle in 1527 and these entrepreneurs propose building a holiday/leisure complex housed in a castle-like building.

In the Courthouse, also, we were given a talk on the history of Lifford by Belinda Mahaffey, a local historian followed by a tour of the prison cells. Manus a' Phice O'Donnell(see ODA No 7) served a term in one of those same cells.

The tour, then, moved on to Mongavlin Castle which was once owned by the O'Donnells and where Red Hugh's mother, Ineen Dubh, lived out her days after the Flight of thr Earls in 1607. Our guide here was Pearl Miller.

Our next stop was the Pintavern in Letterkenny where we were treated to lunch by the proprietor, Alex O'Donnell.

At Mongavlin Castle during the '92 Gathering.

It was then on to Conwal Graveyard to hear Patsy O'Donnell talk of the exploits of Godfrey O'Donnell, one of our greatest chieftains(see ODA No. 13).

From there we journeyed to Gartan, birthplace of St. Colmcille, and beside it, Gartan Graveyard where lie the remains of Manus a' Phice. Manus's heroic escapade was described by Willie O'Donnell. Then, we moved on to nearby Rock of Doon where Vincent O'Donnell gave an account of the inauguration ceremony performed on this rock. 25 chieftains altogether were installed here beginning with Eighneachan in 1200 to Nial Garbh in 1603.

By now the weather had become quite inclement and the tourists were glad that our next stop was Teach Killindarragh where a marvellous meal was served by our hosts Danny(our vice-chairman) and Terry O'Donnell. The meal was followed by an Irish cabaret. The evening ended with the customary singing of 'O'Donnell Abu' and our National Anthem though strains of 'Walzing Matilda' could be heard as the tour guide did his best to get everyone back on board the coach. By the time the coach reached Donegal Town an hour and a half later(12.30 a.m.) the passengers hadn't quite got through singing all the songs in Sodlum's books 1,2 & 3.

Sunday, was a cool, slightly dull day. At 2.00 p.m., as planned, all assembled at the Hyland Central Hotel and followed the leader(again, Vincent O'Donnell) down to the ruins of the Abbey where Monsignor Carrabin outlined the history of this renowned Franciscan friary(see ODA No.17) and its association with the O'Donnells. We, then, moved to the Castle where both the Monsignor and Vincent described its building and history(see ODA No.1).

Immediately after, all gathered into the Hyland Central Hotel for an 'open forum' meeting. Here, at last, the visitors had a chance to talk, ask questions, make comments etc. A very lively and worthwhile meeting it was. The Clan Association, its activities, this Gathering and the future was discussed at length and all criticisms and proposals recorded by our secretary, Ben O'Donnell. The meeting was brought to a close at 6.00 p.m.

struggling through the 'Seige of Ennis'

By 8.00 p.m. people began to arrive for the last event, the Farewell Dinner, which got under way by 8.20. After dinner there were the usual farewell and thank-you speeches. Specially inscribed Donegal Parian China harps with clocks were presented to both Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill and Micheline K. Walsh our very special guests for the weekend. Then, to the music of the Shamrock Ceili Band we danced our way into Monday morning. Some of those from afar were coming to grips with our ceili dances by the end of the night, it is hoped they will perfect those skills for the next Gathering. The committee was very thankful to Hannah O'Hara(our oldest O'Donnell present) for donating some hand-crafted linen which realised over £60 in a raffle. Finally, the evening, and the 1992 O'Donnell Clan Gathering, ended with all forming a ring and singing 'O'Donnell Abu' and our National Anthem. Farewells were said, addresses swopped and slowly people drifted away.

V. O'Donnell.

Counts Douxi' and Rory during their summer visit to Ireland.

New members enrolled since the last list published in No. 16.

D141 Kathleen O Donnell, 14 Swilly Park, Letterkenny.

D142 Anne McClafferty, Dunlewey, Letterkenny.

D143 James P. Corbett, 7A Meadowbrook, Mill Rd., Corbally, Limerick

D144 Eva Sheerin, Belvedere, Bishop's Town Rd., Cork.

D145 Patrick B. J Donnell, 833 Summerset Dr., Hockessin, Delaware 19707, U.S.A.

D146 Thomas Oliver O Donnell, American Embassy/ INS, PSC 59 BOX 60, APO AE 09624, U.S.A.

D147 Brendan O Donnell, 10592 John Ayres DR., Fairfax, VA. 22032, U.S.A.

D148 Sgt. Hubert O Donnell, Custume Barracks, Athlone.

D149 Br. Micheal Denis O.H., St. John of God Hospital, Stillorgan, Co. Dublin.

D150 Hugh O Donnell, 11 St. Francis's Tce., Pennyburn, Derry.

D151 Lucius Emerson, Cluan Barron, Ballyshannon.

D154 J. Vincent O Donnell, 26 De Bretagne, Saint Lambert, Quebeck, Canada J4S 1A1.

D155 Hannah O'Hara, Forevduff, Dromahair, Co. Leitrim.

D156 Francis O Donnell, Hillcrest Drive, Kesh Rd., Irvinstown, Co. Fermanagh.

D157 Charles O Donnell, Dickson Street Bookshop, 325 West Dickson St., Fayetteville, Ark. 72701, U.S.A.

D158 Mrs. S. M. Bartlett, 62 Argyll Rd., Kinross, Tayside KY13 7BL, Scotland.

JOE O´DONNELL, WARTIME PHOTOGRAPHER.
(Copy of an article in The Tennessean, 30th July 1990.)

FRANK RITTER
Staff Writer

WHEN atomic bombs brought an horrendous end to World War II in August of 1945, U.S. Marine Sgt. Joesph R. O'Donnell was there to record the bitter aftermath.

But negatives of pictures the 23-year-old combat photographer took of the devastation lay untouched for decades in musty old attic trunks — until last year.

Now, a handful of those dramatic photos have been assembled in an exhibit to be displayed at Cheekwood Fine Arts Center, starting Saturday with an opening from 1 to 5 p.m., and extending through Aug. 26.

"My pictures — seen here for the first time — and my comments about nuclear war are long overdue," says O'Donnell, now 68 and retired to Nashville after having served under five different U.S. presidents as a White House photographer.

"I regret that I kept quiet for the last 45 years. I needed to make a statement on the nuclear issue. I feel that dropping the bombs was morally wrong, just as much as the Holocaust was.

"I hope to remind people of how it was in Japan 45 years ago, and how it could be again, but worse. The threat of nuclear war is still with us today. Peace is our only hope."

How it was in Japan in 1945 has long been the subject of debate. The question: Was the U.S. justified in dropping the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

The first bomb, dropped Aug. 6 on Hiroshima, killed 92,000 outright; others died later from radiation. The second bomb, on Aug. 9, killed 40,000 in Nagasaki. Japan surrendered Aug. 14, 1945.

O'Donnell, a native of Johnstown, Pa., joined the Marines at the age of 19, just days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

During the next four years, he learned to be a combat photographer, and was dispatched to the Japanese island of Kyushu in early September of 1945 to photograph the landing of American occupation forces after the war's end.

For the next six months, O'Donnell spent most of his time in nearby Hiroshima and Nagasaki, traveling about the countryside and taking pictures of the devastation — both to people and to what formerly had been their homes and communities.

What O'Donnell witnessed was not to be believed. "It was hard to believe I was still standing on the planet Earth," he says. "This was man-made disaster of the cruelest kind — an act against humanity that killed women, children, the elderly, the innocent."

O'Donnell usually used a jeep to get around. "But once," he says, "I traded cigarettes for a horse; it took me to areas where the jeep wouldn't go.

"I slept on the ground, and often would wake up with 25 little Japanese boys standing around me. I was armed with a 45 and a bowie knife, and they seemed to be afraid of me. They wouldn't pose at first. I had to devise something to warm them up.

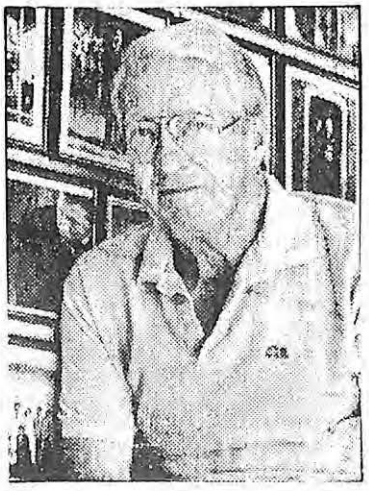
"So, I started taking Hershey bars and cigarettes with me to hand out. Of course, times change: Today, I wouldn't be giving away cigarettes, because of the health hazards."

There were hazards then to his own health that O'Donnell didn't realize until years later. Radiation from the atomic blasts had long-range effects — both on the bombs' survivors, and on those who visited the area.

O'Donnell left the Marines in March of 1946 and then became a White House photographer. He served under Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon, and photographed many of the world's leaders. He retired from that position in 1968, and moved from Clinton, Mich., to Nashville 10 years ago.

"None of us back then in 1945 knew the dangers of radiation," O'Donnell says. "Little did I know how that would change my life."

O'Donnell characterizes himself as "lucky," despite having undergone more than 40 surgeries during the past two decades, the most recent a spinal implant.



If was after one such operation last year, when he was in much pain and depressed, that he went on a religious retreat at the Sisters of Loretto Motherhouse in Kentucky. He had been asking God, "Why have I been spared all these years?" At Loretto one day, he saw a sculpture done by a resident nun, Sister Jeanne Deuber. Suddenly he had the answer to his question.

The life-sized figure of a flame-scarred man on a cross was titled "Once." It was created in honor of the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

"It triggered in me memories of my own experience," O'Donnell recalls. "And it inspired me to think about my own possible contribution to the effort to prevent nuclear war. I had been spared all those years so I could make my own statement."

He went home and started going through the musty trunks, filled with negatives, all carefully packaged and labeled. From them, O'Donnell chose about two dozen for display at the Cheekwood exhibit marking the 45th anniversary of the dropping of the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

"If you expect to see lots of horrible pictures and piles of burned victims waiting to be cremated, you will not," he explains. "I will not exploit the victims again. I will never live long enough to forget how I intimidated them once by taking pictures of

MONGAVLIN CASTLE

(Talk given at Mongavlin Castle by Pearl Millar during the '92 Clan Gathering and published here with her kind permission.)

As you know the O'Donnells are descendents of one Domhnall, died 901, a descendent of Conall Gulban one of the three sons of Niall of the Nine Hostages and for four centuries one of the most powerful families in Ireland. Originally they were based around Kilmacrennan but from the 13th century they became the leading sept in Tirconaill. There are over 300 references to individual O'Donnells in the Annals of the Four Masters. The name O'Donnell is first mentioned in the Annals in 1010 e.g. Maolruaraidh O Donnell Lord of Cineal Lughdheach.

In 1263 Donnell O'Breslen, chief of Fanad, was slain in the Bishop's Court at Raphoe by Donall Og O'Donnell, Lord of Tirconaill (1258-1281). So presumably O'Donnells were living in, and defending, the area at that time. There are many references to the Lough Foyle area and while this often means Derry or even Lifford the land between must surely have been inhabited by O'Donnells.

First the Danes, then the Normans who ruled until 1333, the English, and the O'Donnells, O'Neills and O'Dohertys fought for this land. In the struggle for territorial supremacy between O'Neill and O'Donnell the ownership of this stretch of land would have swung between the two. If O'Neill was supreme the boundary would have been the Swilly, if O'Donnell, the Foyle. The rivalry between Cineal Conaill and Cineal Eoghain was the abiding feature of the history of the 'Lagan' i.e. this area of Donegal, until the end of the 16th century. In 1557 Calvagh O'Donnell encamped on top of Binion Hill, visible from the castle, and routed, with the help of gallowglasses, Shane O'Neill and his army. Scottish raiding parties would covet the area also. In 1586 Alsander MacDonnell of the Isles, a relative of Inion Dubh, led a particularly severe raid. They were only defeated when Sean Og O'Doherty and Hugh Dubh O'Donnell informed the English garrison in Lifford that MacDonnell was intending to attack them. This was not necessarily true but Alsander was defeated by the English at Bun an Abair near Mongavlin, and Hugh Dubh did not have to fight his wife's relatives! Cineal Conaill often worked through the O'Dohertys to establish dominance of the area [they had the crowning stone at Ardnadition(Ard na dTaoisigh - Chieftain's Hill) near Manorcunningham].

The best documented connection of the O'Donnells to Mongavlin Castle is in the latter part of the 16th century. Mongavlin was originally Maghgaibhlin meaning 'the plain of the little river fork'. Hugh Dubh O'Donnell had married an Irishwoman by whom he had two sons, Rory and Domhnall, and a daughter, Siobhan, who married Hugh O'Neill. His second wife was Finola MacDonnell(Inion Dubh) daughter of James MacDonnell of the Isles. This castle of Mongavlin was her chief house, another of her houses was at Carrigans. The State Paper recording her possessions reads 'From Cul-Mac-Tryan runs a bogg 3 miles in length to the side of Lough Foyle - in the midst of the bogg is a standing houghe called Bunaber - here at Bunaber dwells O'Donnells mother(Ineed Dubh Mac Donnell). Three miles above Cargan stands a fort called Mc Gevyvelin upon the river of Lough Foyle - O'Donnells mothers chief house.' The site of the Carrigans house is said to have been where the old flax mill was situated and was used around 1599 as a site for a small defensive castle (one of six built by Dowcra, the English commander at Lifford.)

Hugh Dubh, with his wife Finola, Inion Dubh, and their offspring Red Hugh, Rory and Nuala in particular are the most interesting part of the O'Donnell connection with this castle. If Inion Dubh came here as a bride, it must have been inhabited by O'Donnells from at least 1570 but probably from much earlier. Inion Dubh herself was a remarkable woman for her time, in many ways a contradiction. She was beautiful - described as "the fair Inion Dubh, the Dark Daughter". She was also ruthless, described in Elizabeth's Irish Wars as a "capable Scots virago" whose ambition was to secure for her son,Red Hugh,the chieftaincy of the country and would stop at nothing to do so. Fear of this ambition may have led to the kidnap of Red Hugh in 1587. An illegitimate brother of Red Hugh who had also aspired to the chieftaincy had been "put out of the way" by Inion Dubh. Some historians say she dominated her husband Hugh Dubh - they describe her as "an enterprising

Scots wife dominating a sluggish Irish husband". She was certainly the channel by which great numbers of Scottish mercenaries (galloglaigh) came to Ireland. On her marriage she brought with her 100 Scottish mercenaries, 80 of them reputedly the "tallest men in Scotland" and all Crawford. Descendants of these Crawfords live in the area to this day and some can recall stories of their ancestors being gardeners at Mongavlin Castle. In Red Hugh's upbringing and the hatred of the English which she inspired in a family recently loyal she exercised a great influence on the fate of Ireland. In Sean O Faolain's "The Great O'Neill" Inion Dubh is described as being 'imbued with a relentless hatred of the English'.

Interestingly enough her mother, Lady Agnes MacDonnell, widow of James MacDonnell of the Isles married Hugh O'Neill at about the same time as Finola married Hugh Dubh. On the subject of mercenaries, one historian records that the Northern chiefs at one time used the galleys of Grainne O'Malley to ferry the Galloglaigh from Scotland, which surely would have been an exciting sight on the Foyle.

The story of Red Hugh is legend, and many glowing descriptions of him are to be found. It was said of him that he never suffered wrong, reverse or insult without taking immediate vengeance and that he was a warlike, predatory, aggresive plunderer of other's 'territories'. On the other hand he was a dove in meekness and gentleness to all who did not oppose him, not a common standard for a Celtic prince. His morals were pure, an even rarer virtue. He was a man of middle height, with ruddy hair and skin, hence "Rua" and wonderfully handsome. His speech was eloquent and his voice musical. He was altogether a remarkable young man. Some say that if Red Hugh had lived he might have come to be recognised as a greater man than Hugh O'Neill.

Of Inion Dubh's other family, Rory became the first Earl of Tirconaill in 1603 and in 1607 fled with the Earls from Rathmullan. He was married to Bridget Fitzgerald of Kildare. Their young son Hugh fled with him but Bridget was at home with her family in Maynooth and pregnant with their second child at the time. She had to make the best of being the wife of a so-called 'traitor' but she continued defiantly to sign herself 'Bridget O'Donnell' until her death. Her daughter, Mary, known as Mary Stuart O'Donnell was notorious for her rebellious associations and as a teenager helped her kinsmen in England. Nuala, Red Hugh's sister, formerly married to the infamous Niall Garbh O'Donnell, who changed sides as most do socks, left him amd fled also. She tutored the young Hugh, Rory's son, in Louvain. He was drowned in a sea-battle in 1642. The same infamous Niall Garbh slew his brother-in-law Manus at Lifford. He, also, on one occasion threw Inion Dubh out of Mongavlin and installed himself to keep a watch for loot in Derry when Sir Cahir O'Doherty was trying to recapture it. David Crafford, probably one of Finola's Crawfords, also fled as Rory's butler, but later returned.

The association of the O'Donnells with the ownereship of this site came to an end with the Plantation of Ulster when the area was granted to the Duke of Lennox. On the 23rd July 1610 Ludovic Kennedy, Duke of Lennox, was given 1,000 acres at Mongavlin and a house was started here before 1619. The castle was 50 ft. in length by 23ft. wide, three and a half stories high with four flankers, three of which are still visible and an iron door portcullis-wise to raise in front of the castle facing the Foyle. The castle, later, came into the hands of the Abercorn family and by the 1800's had fallen into disrepair. At the time of the Seige of Derry in 1689 King James is said to have made his headquarters at Mongavlin. Local legends say he later moved to a small house in St. Johnston, inhabited by a family called Cowan. Ironically, a son of this household was inside Derry's walls helping to defend the city. James, also, is said to have viewed the rich land fron Binion Hill and remarked, "a land well worth a fight, my Lord'. The Lennoxes and Abercorns are all gone from the district. Only the O'Donnells and the Crawfords, once so humbly connected with the Castle, now remain.

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